

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HERSETH CALLS ON USDA TO KEEP BORDER CLOSED

January 6, 2005, Washington, DC – Following the recent discovery of another Canadian cow infected with BSE, Rep. Stephanie Herseth is calling on the U.S. Department of Agriculture to keep the border to Canada closed.

In a letter to Secretary Veneman, Herseth notes that this latest discovery is a clear indication that the rationale for the ban, which was put in place in May of 2003 in response to the initial discovery of a Canadian animal with BSE, continues to exist. She writes, "If the border is reopened with these uncertainties in place, American cattle producers are likely to be battered by both increased imports and lost consumer confidence."

See full text of letter below:

January 5, 2005

The Honorable Ann M. Veneman
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Veneman,

In light of the recent discovery of another Canadian cow infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), I urge you to reconsider your decision to rescind the ban on the importation of live bovine animals into the United States from Canada.

The recently discovered occurrence of BSE in Canada raises questions about Canada's implementation of regulations and other safeguards to control the spread of BSE in its domestic herd. These circumstances should cause the Department of Agriculture to reconsider the timeline for reopening our border to Canadian cattle. This discovery is a clear indication that the rationale for the ban, which was put in place in May of 2003 in response to the initial discovery of a Canadian animal with BSE, continues to exist. The decision to reopen the border without further assurances and additional safeguards is premature.

The need for this ban becomes even more evident given the delays in implementing mandatory country-of-origin meat labeling and our inability to reestablish beef trade with many of our largest international customers since the discovery of a Canadian-born BSE animal in Washington State in December of 2003. If the border is reopened with these uncertainties in place, American cattle producers are likely to be battered by both increased imports and lost consumer confidence.

For these reasons, I urge you to rescind the rules that the Department has set forth that would allow the importation of Canadian cattle and to maintain the current ban on live Canadian cattle

until it can be better determined the scope of BSE in Canadian cattle herds. I plan to request hearings in the House Agriculture Committee to review the scope and coverage of USDA's import ban and to underscore the specific factors that support its continuation.

Thank you for your prompt response to this request.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Herseth
United States Congress